

## Annual Council

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<b>Date:</b>	Wednesday 13 May 2020
<b>Title:</b>	Proposed Revised Committee Structure 2020/21 onwards
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Town Clerk – Sharon Groth Office Manager – Adam Clapton

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### Background

It is usual practice to review the Council's Committee structure and set a calendar of meetings during the 5<sup>th</sup> or 6<sup>th</sup> cycle of meetings each year – and this would have been presented to the Policy, Governance & Finance Committee had we been able to meet on 23 March 2020, and consequently been ratified at full Council on 6 April 2020 .

Given the fundamental changes implemented rather rapidly at the start of the new term of administration in May 2019, along with the addition of new Working Parties and Sub-Committees during the course of the municipal year and trying to schedule those meetings, the Officers have felt it necessary to review the efficiency of the structure in terms of Officer time afforded to attending meetings as well as the vast amount of preparation of report writing etc also required prior to the meeting.

As a result, the attached Committee structure has been devised for your consideration and scrutiny.

### Explanation of the proposed Committee Structure

As background, to try and explain the proposed structure, we have reinstated a committee – Members may be aware that last May the Sport and Recreation Committee was amalgamated with the Estates Committee to form the Halls & Green Spaces, thereby reducing the overall number of standing committees.

*[Officers consider that the loss of a committee has often led to longer meetings due to the amount of business on the agenda. The creation of additional Working Parties and Sub-committees has also made their administration difficult. Although an attempt to schedule these meetings was made, it has still been necessary to hold them ad-hoc and in the daytime on occasion to reduce the accrual of Officer Lieu time but this has not suited many Members.]*

At the Full Council meeting held on 10<sup>th</sup> February 2020 (minute no. 64) it was resolved that officers would investigate the possibility of incorporating an additional Sub-committee into the new year's calendar – which has afforded the Officers the time to scrutinise the structure and how it had operated and how it could operate more efficiently going forward.

It is proposed that because of their ongoing nature, the In Bloom, Sports Provision, Play Area Facilities and Christmas sub-committees be incorporated into the Council's standing committees, therefore increasing the number from four to five:

- Sport & Play Committee
- Amenities Committee

- Stronger Communities Committee
- Policy, Governance and Finance Committee

It is also proposed that the Climate & Biodiversity Sub- Committee be incorporated into the Planning & Development Committee:

- Planning, Climate & Environment Committee

Although Planning can already be quite cumbersome, it is proposed that only the first meeting of each cycle deals with environmental matters – this would be an enhancement on the previous timetable of the Climate & Biodiversity Committee in order to try and agree and implement some actions accordingly.

It should be acknowledged that with every decision the Council makes it should be taking into account the impact that decision has in line with the Council’s Climate Motion its passed in June 2019 – and Officers had added **Environmental Impact** as a sub-heading in to their reports in order to focus and assist with the decision making. So, the subject of Climate & Environment does span wider than just one designated committee – although at some point there does need to be a measure of how the Council/Town is doing with its ambitious pledge to be carbon neutral by 2028.

**OR and alternative to the suggestion of amalgamating the Planning, Climate & Environment could be that a Climate Working Party is established which could meet at 5pm (prior to the Planning Committee) once each cycle of meetings, but it would be time limited.**

The incorporation of the sub-committees does not mean that other stakeholders, organisational representatives and members of the public can no longer take part. Meetings can still take place between committees with these representatives and the Chair [or Officers] can then report their findings. This has the added benefit of freeing officers up unless they are required to attend or answer questions before or after.

#### Sub-Committees

The remaining sub-committees would be statutory and consist of:

- Personnel Sub-committee
- Disciplinary & Grievance Sub-Committee

#### Working Parties

The remaining Working Party’s would consist of, only to deal with the current project of Phase 2 refurb/redevelopment [and beyond if necessary]:

- Corn Exchange Working Party

A full breakdown of the Committee Structure and what is covered by each committee can be found attached as **Appendix A**.

#### **Implementation & Calendar of Meetings**

The proposed committee structure was drafted prior to the COVID-19 pandemic with the continuation of face to face meetings in mind based on 6 cycles of meetings per year. At the time of writing this report new regulations The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of

Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020 (“the 2020 Regulations”) have now come into force permitting virtual meetings via online facilities such as ZOOM. **It should be noted that these regulations are time limited – until May 2021, therefore virtual meetings are only a temporary measure for the time being.**

Additionally, an announcement is awaited on the relaxation of lockdown measures and how this may affect the running of the Council and its meetings – more should be known by the time of this meeting.

For that reason no calendar of meetings has been drafted as yet – as Officers await the agreement or amendment of this structure. Once a structure is agreed and hopefully more information on post lockdown will be available a calendar will be drafted for agreement at a future Council meeting, along with the allocation of Committee places. This will be communicated in the next few weeks.

As the country gets itself back up and running, which will obviously take time, it is assumed that the Council would be able to do limited decision making in any case – but the Town Clerk will discuss the way forward with the Council’s Leadership in due course.

### **Environmental Impact**

Having declared a Climate Change Emergency at its Council meeting on 26 June 2019 – with this in mind Councillors should have due regard to the environmental impact of any decisions they make with regard to its facilities and services it operates.

### **Risk**

It is imperative the Council has a robust and efficient system for its democratic decision making in order to ensure decisions are made lawfully in line with regulations, legislation and standing orders.

The Council employs professional qualified Officers to advise and ensure that decisions are not ultra-vires. The proposed structure would potentially reduce the number of meetings and consequently the administration for and of would hopefully reduce enabling Officers to carry out the resolutions in a timelier manner.

The Council as an employer also has a duty of care to its employees and to ensure that its structures and processes do not bring detriment to their health and wellbeing, and impact on things like their work/life balance.

### **Financial Implications**

A reduction in the number of meetings to administer and attend would ultimately have a resource saving of time and also lieu time, which will hopefully enable Officers to get on with the day to day management of the Council’s facilities and services as well as implementing the resolutions arising out of the meetings.

### **Recommendation**

Members are invited to note the report and consider the proposed revised Committee Structure as presented, agreeing or amending where necessary.

**APPENDICES**

**Appendix A** Draft Committee Structure 2020-21